

- The Southeastern European Defense Ministerial brings the Defense Ministers of the region together with other interested countries to discuss issues of common concern and develop projects for the year aimed at promoting regional cooperation and confidence building. Bulgaria hosted the last Ministerial in October 1997, which resulted in 27 follow-on activities.

These bilateral and multilateral initiatives will advance our shared goal of a Europe whole, free and at peace. They will also promote the integration of Bulgaria and the other stable democracies of Southeastern Europe into the European and transatlantic mainstream.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

### **Remarks on Presenting the Ron Brown Award for Corporate Leadership**

*February 11, 1998*

Thank you very much, Secretary Daley, Secretary Herman, Mr. Woolard, Mr. Barnett. To Alma, Michael, Tammy, and Tracey Brown, welcome, and thank you for your continuing efforts. To Lou Gerstner and Bob Haas, congratulations. And also, I want to recognize representatives of our other three companies that have been recognized for their achievements: Al Koepp of Public Service Electric and Gas Company; Roger Brown and Linda Mason of Bright Horizons; Dr. Wilson Hershey of Lancaster Labs. I'll say more about them in a moment.

Ron Brown was one of the most visionary, optimistic, confident people I ever met in my life. As he saw it, there should never be any losers, only winners, if we simply bridged our differences and worked together. He was a very forceful advocate for American business, but he was also committed to building a future for all Americans. And he believed, and I think helped more and more Americans to understand, that being pro-business and pro-worker and in favor of workers' families not only did not have to be mutually exclusive but, in the world in which we're living and

the one toward which we're moving, can never be mutually exclusive again.

He understood the most fundamental responsibility for a business is to make a profit by competing and growing in the marketplace. But he also knew that the ingenuity, the skill, the work, and the morale of American people in their workplaces fuel our economy and that helping employees to succeed at work and at home helped the companies in the end more than anything else: first, creating jobs and giving employees fair raises, providing affordable health care, training, partnerships, safe workplaces; standing up for the idea that we needed everybody to have a fair chance to participate at every level in all American companies. All these things can be good for the bottom line.

The Corporate Leadership Awards bestowed today for the first time in Ron's memory embodies these beliefs. Just as the Baldrige Award honors companies who succeed by meeting the needs of their customers, the Ron Brown Award honors companies who succeed by meeting the needs of their employees and their communities.

I'm pleased that the award itself, encouraged by Government but privately funded and administered, reflects the new vision of Government Ron and I both worked so hard to bring to our Nation. America has now moved beyond the tired debate of Government should do everything or Government should do nothing. We have found a third way: Our vision is that Government should be a partner with the private sector, with State and local government, with community groups, with individual citizens, to provide Americans the tools to make the most of their own lives, to act as a catalyst to shine the spotlight on innovations that work in one place so they have a chance to be embraced everywhere in America.

Today we shine a spotlight on five American companies who have proven that business can do well by doing right by their employees and their communities. To millions around the world here and at home, a pair of Levis and an IBM computer are as American as baseball and apple pie. I had a pair of Levis on last night. *[Laughter]* I don't wear my computer. *[Laughter]*

I was laughing when you told the story about—when Alexis said the story about Ron wearing Levis—I was remembering when I was in high school the neatest thing you could do was to buy a pair of Levis and take the stitches out of the “v” on the back pockets. Now you have to be pretty old to remember when that was cool. But I do. [Laughter]

These companies represent the best American creativity in marketing, of craftsmanship and manufacturing, and with these first-ever Ron Brown Awards we recognize they represent the best of our corporate citizenship. We honor these companies for the leading role they have played in ensuring America’s growing diversity becomes our greatest strength in the 21st century as we strive to become truly one America.

Through a longstanding commitment to work force diversity, IBM has fostered a corporate culture that values, cultivates, and recruits the talents of all our people to boardrooms, laboratories, and factories.

We commend Levi Strauss for refusing to turn a blind eye on the racism that undermines the quality of life in the communities in which their plants are located. Through Project Change, Levi has worked with local leaders all across the country—and some of them introduced here today—to fight old hatreds and fill the opportunity gaps between the races. From increasing access to credit and capital in Albuquerque to raising awareness about hate crimes in Knoxville, these two companies’ efforts on behalf of diversity and against racism are models which we hope by this award to have followed by more companies all across the United States.

I also want to pay tribute to the three companies that received honorable mention. I mentioned their representatives earlier: Bright Horizons children’s centers, Lancaster Laboratories, Public Service Electric and Gas Company. I thank them for their leadership and innovation in strengthening their communities, helping their employees meet the responsibilities of parenthood and at work. I hope their successes will also inspire more companies to follow in their footsteps.

I still miss Ron Brown a lot, and I think of him often. It’s hard for me to believe that in a few weeks we’ll celebrate—or mark—the second anniversary of his passing. In a

very special way, every time we present these awards to deserving businesses, we will keep alive the mission that Ron Brown was on nearly two Aprils ago in the Balkans: to promote the idea that business can do well by doing good, that they can profit by bringing hope and prosperity to people.

I know Ron is smiling down on us today. I know he’s proud of the five companies we’ve honored. I know he’s looking forward to the day when companies in every community in our Nation will have earned the distinction of being Ron Brown Award winners.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:32 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Edgar S. Woolard, Jr., chair, and Curtis H. Barnette, member, board of directors, Ron Brown Award for Corporate Leadership; Alma Brown, widow of former Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, and their children Michael, Tammy, and Tracey; Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., chief executive officer, IBM; Robert Haas, chief executive officer, Levi Strauss & Co.; Alfred C. Koeppe, vice president, Public Service Electric and Gas Company; Roger Brown and Linda Mason, owners, Bright Horizons; and J. Wilson Hershey, president, Lancaster Laboratories.

### **Remarks on Signing the Transmittal to the Senate of the Protocols of Accession to NATO for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic**

*February 11, 1998*

Thank you very much, Mr. Vice President, Madam Secretary, Senator Roth, Senator Biden, Senator Lieberman, Senator Mikulski, Senator DeWine, Congressman Solomon, Congressman Gejdenson, Deputy Secretary of Defense Hamre, NSA Adviser Berger, and the other distinguished military and diplomatic and citizen guests who are here. I especially thank the retired members of the Joint Chiefs who have endorsed NATO expansion. And thank you, Secretary Haig and Mr. Brzezinski and Mr. Sweeney for being here. To all the diplomatic corps and especially to Minister Kovacs, Minister Geremek, and Minister Sedivy, we are pleased that all of you are here today.